

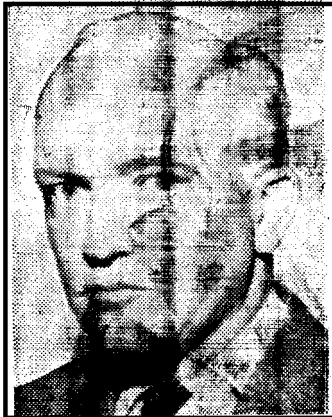
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CUBAN EXILES SEE PRISONER RELEASE SOON

Donovan in Havana to Try for Swap



James B. Donovan

HAVANA, Cuba, Dec. 18 (AP)—

American negotiator James B. Donovan arrived today to try to seal the barter deal with Premier Fidel Castro for freedom of 1,113 Bay of Pigs invasion prisoners.

Optimism that the captives might be released by Christmas, or at least in the near future, was expressed by their relatives here and in Miami.

Donovan, New York attorney who engineered the swap of American U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers for Russian spy Rudolph Abel, flew here from Miami accompanied by three Cuban negotiators.

To Barreto Home

The four were whisked from the airport in Cuban security service automobiles. They were reported to have been taken to the home of Mrs. Berta Barreto, one of the four negotiators. Previous talks on the prisoners' release were held there.

Also arriving were Alvaro Sanchez and Mrs. Virginia Betancourt, officials of the Cuban families committee composed of prisoners' relatives.

Relatives in Cuba were jubilant. They heard over United States and Cuban radio that an American freighter was ready to deliver food and medicine in exchange for the captives taken in the ill-fated April 1961 invasion.

Wins \$62,000,000 Ransom

Castro demanded \$62,000,000 for their freedom, and later agreed to food and medicine valued by Castro at \$62,000,000.

Steaming from Baltimore to

Port Everglades, Fla., north of Miami, was the S. S. African Pilot.

The 435-foot freighter, lent by the Farrell Lines to the American Red Cross, which assumed sponsorship of the prisoner exchange, is expected at the Florida port Thursday.

If the prisoners are released, they probably will be flown in charter planes to Miami, said Cuban Families committee officials there.

The Red Cross was stockpiling food and medicine gifts in warehouses at Opa-Locka air field in the Miami area.

From Drug Firms

W. D. Dibrow, Southeastern United States disaster director for the Red Cross, said the donations would be transferred to the African Pilot or other vessels designated for transportation if the swap materialized. He said many contributions had been received from pharmaceutical companies.

In Washington, state department sources said Donovan and the committee were successful in soliciting donations, particularly from American drug firms offering the medicines supposed to go to Castro under the exchange deal.

Lincoln White, state department press officer, declined comment when asked whether the government contributed money or food and medicine for the release of the prisoners.

Families Very Happy

Enrique Llaca, Cuban Families committee director, commented in Miami: "We feel very happy. I hope that the negotiations can finally be completed now, after 20 months of very hard work."

About 20,000 prisoners' relatives in the Miami area echoed his sentiments.

Donovan, on his third flight to Havana to negotiate for the release, took off in secrecy from a guarded runway a mile distant from Miami International airport. Reporters and the public were kept away.

Cargoes by Air Lines

In New York, American Airlines said it will fly 100,000 pounds of drugs and medicine to Florida at the request of the Red Cross. One plane will fly tomorrow, another on Thursday, and a third Saturday.

Trans World Airlines said it flew 32,000 pounds of medicine to Miami from New York last night. It said it also would fly 28,000 pounds from St. Louis and 19,000 pounds from Los Angeles between now and Friday.

TWA said its shipments were ordered by the Air Transport association, a private organization of aviation executives.

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